1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

Little Andaman	672
South Andaman Jarawa . .	117
Rutland Island Jarawa . .	351
North Sentinel Island. . .	117
Total . .	1257

This estimate is not of any great value. As regards the Little Andaman, my own information would lead me to estimate their numbers at between 600 and 700, thus agreeing with the estimate above. Concerning the North Sentinel Island nothing is known on which a satisfactory estimate could be based. The figures for the Rutland Island *Jarawa* are certainly very much too high. In 1907 I spent some weeks on Rutland Island trying to get into touch with the *Jarawa* there. At that time there were certainly not more than 50 all told on the island. I was only able to discover one camp, and that had been deserted just before it was discovered, but had not contained a dozen persons. The Rutland Island *Jarawa* have been cut off from the other *Jarawa* by the spread of the convict Settlement since about 1885. The majority of the *Jarawa* now inhabit the interior and western coast of the South Andaman north of Port Blair.

During the last fifty years the numbers of the Andamanese have been greatly diminished. This has been the result of the European occupation of the islands, and is chiefly due to new diseases that have been introduced amongst them. Syphilis was introduced among the tribes of the South Andaman about 1870, and this has now spread among all the Great Andaman tribes (that is, excluding the hostile *Jarawa*). A large number of natives are infected, and the disease is responsible directly and indirectly for a considerable increase in the death-rate. In March, 1877, an epidemic of measles broke out among the Andamanese, introduced with a batch of convicts from Madras, and spread rapidly from one end of the Great Andaman to the other. In six weeks 51 out of 184 cases treated in hospital proved fatal. It is almost certain that the proportion of deaths was much greater in the case of those, the vast majority, to whom no medical aid could be given. A writer on the Andamans[1] has

[1] Portman, M. V., *A History of Our Relations with the Andamanese*, Calcutta, 1899.

1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

164 estimated that the mortality from measles and its sequelae was
165 one-half if not two-thirds of the whole population of the Great Andaman. Other diseases which were formerly unknown to the islands seem also to have been introduced, including influenza.

163 While the death-rate amongst the friendly Andamanese has been enormously increased, the birth-rate has at the same time fallen to almost nothing. This is evident from the proportion of adults to children in the population table given above. In 1907, out of a total of about 500 natives whom I saw at different times, there were not more than a dozen children of less than five years old. A birth is a rare occurrence, and of the children born very few survive infancy.

165 This decrease of population has not as yet affected the
619 Little Andaman. The natives of this island have had very little contact with the Penal Settlement or with the tribes of the Great Andaman, and have thus escaped the diseases which are mainly responsible for the depopulation of the larger island.

Several attempts have been made to estimate the former population of the Andamans. In the "Census Report" for 1901 the estimate given is 4800 for the whole group. Mr M. V. Portman has given an estimate of 8000. It seemed to me that one of these is too small and the other too large. Judging from what it is possible to learn about the habits of the natives, and the food supply available, I should estimate that the former population of the islands (in 1858) was about 5500[1]. An estimate for the proportion of the different groups is as follows:—

	Estimated former population.	Density per square mile.
North Andaman (four tribes)	1500	2·75
Middle Andaman with Baratang and Ritchie's Archipelago	2250	2·5
South Andaman (Aka-Bea and Jarawa)	1200	2·0
Little Andaman and North Sentinel	700	1·75
Total	5650	2·25

[1] This estimate is based on what the Andamanese were able to tell me of the conditions under which they formerly lived. Of course such an estimate can only be of small value. I think it is more probable that I have underestimated the former population than that I have overestimated it.

1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

With regard to the comparative density per square mile of the different groups it may be pointed out that the reason for the smaller density of the South Andaman is the fact that the *Aka-Bea* and *Jarawa* were living there at war with one another, and the territory was therefore probably not so fully occupied as in other parts of the islands where boundaries between neighbouring tribes were well defined. The food supply of the Little Andaman does not seem to be so abundant as that of the Great Andaman in proportion to its area. It must be remembered that length of coast-line is of more importance to the Andamanese than the actual area of their country. The natives of the Little Andaman are not able to harpoon turtle and large fish, which constitute an important element of the food supply of the tribes of the Great Andaman.

If the figures of the above estimate be correct, it will be seen that the population of the North Andaman has been reduced in less than fifty years (1858–1901) to about 27 per cent. of its former volume, while in the same period the population of the Middle Andaman and South Andaman has been reduced to about 18 per cent. As the tribes in the south were the first to come into contact with the Settlement, their numbers have diminished more rapidly than those of the northern tribes. It is probable that in another fifty years the natives of the Great Andaman tribes will be extinct.

The diminution of population has combined with other causes to alter considerably the mode of life of the islanders. What were formerly distinct and often hostile communities are now merged together. The different languages have become corrupt, and some tribes have adopted customs of other tribes and have abandoned their own. Most of the younger men and women of the friendly tribes of the Great Andaman now speak a little Hindustani (Urdu) in a somewhat corrupt form. The friendly natives are under the charge of an officer of the Settlement, known as the Officer in Charge of the Andamanese. A Home and Hospital are provided for them in Port Blair, and natives from all parts, even from the extreme north, go there either to be treated in the Hospital or to stay at the Home. During certain parts of the year some of the natives

2:Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

presented by their densely wooded and hilly country, which facts have combined to isolate the various communities, and to check freedom of intercourse among them; further, in the case of Little Andaman, it may fairly be assumed that the peculiar bee-hive form of their huts, as well as certain modifications of their domestic habits and customs, have been borrowed from their neighbours, the Car Nicobarese, upon whom, in the last century, they made some hostile raids.

IV. That, in spite of all our endeavours to protect them, contact with civilisation has been marked with the usual lamentable result of reducing the aboriginal population; indeed, the death-rate, among those within the area of our influence, during the past twenty years has so far exceeded the birth-rate, as to compel the belief that before many decades have passed, the race, at least that portion of it which inhabits Great Andaman, will be well-nigh extinct.

In view of their probable early extermination, and the rapidity with which they are being meantime reduced to the standard of civilised manners, it seems very desirable that, ere it be too late, all possible information respecting their habits, customs, physical characteristics, etc., should be obtained, more especially as many of the errors which, excusably enough, found their way into the early accounts, having been allowed to pass unchallenged, are accepted as trustworthy, and false ethnological theories are built on these most imperfect bases.

Almost all accounts which have been written regarding these islanders speak of them as *Mincopies*, in explanation of which it is asserted that it is thus "these people style themselves;" but this is far from being the case, for not only is the name, or any at all resembling it, unknown to the *bō·jig-ngī·ji-*,[1] *i.e.*, the inhabitants of South Andaman, but the other six tribes with which we are acquainted are in a like state of ignorance as to its origin and significance. The only sounds at all approximating it in the South Andaman dialect at the present day being *min kaich!* (come here!) and *kâ·min kâ·pi!* (stand here!). The former of these being in common use may have given rise to the term (*Mincopie*) as a nickname, to which, indeed, it may possibly have borne a more striking similarity of sound in the language spoken at the period when this name was first adopted; for each generation cannot fail to produce changes more remarkable, and even of greater importance in the phonology of an unwritten language, such as this, depending as

[1] For the list of symbols adopted for denoting the sounds in this language *see* Appendix A; this list has been finally adopted in accordance with the kind advice of Mr. A. J. Ellis, F.R.S., whose valuable assistance I would here again gratefully acknowledge.

2: Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

302 they never intentionally interfere with the natural colour, but some of the pigment, *kòi·ob-*, with which they so frequently paint their persons sometimes accidentally adheres to their curly wigs, these being often used for wiping or drying their hands.

142 10. The colour of the hair among different individuals varies between black, greyish-black, and sooty, the last perhaps predominating; it is apparently uninfluenced by, and does not correspond with, the hue of the eye or skin; it commences to turn grey about the fortieth year, but the number of those who exceed that age being small, white hair is seldom seen.

●165 **Development and Decay.**—1. The average length of life, owing to excessive infant mortality as well as to the small number that attain old age, can hardly be reckoned as much, if at all, beyond 22 years. Not more than three generations of the same family have ever been known to be alive at the same time.

2. Fifty years is believed to be the extreme limit of age among them, and the majority of those who attain it are women.

145 3. Judging from those whose births have been registered by us, it would seem that physical development takes place at a late age as compared with natives of India, the males not attaining puberty till about the 16th year, and the females not before the 15th,[1] while the maxima of stature and bulk are not reached till two or three years later; should the opinion thus formed be confirmed by further observations, the fact will serve to weaken the theories that have been advanced by some anthropologists to account for the phenomenon hitherto assumed to be of universal application, that "the period of immaturity is curtailed in inverse proportion to the approximation to the equator or the polar circle;"[2] but, as the same writer goes on to say, "probably the latitude of the abode has no reference to this phenomenon; it may more probably have some connection with the darkness of the skin."

141 4. Among the Andamanese, when the head is in the customary position, the line taken by a horizontal plane drawn through the *meatus auditorius* would, in most cases, pass through the apex of the facial angle, or, in exceptional cases, somewhat lower. I cannot entirely concur in the opinion expressed by Dr. Brander regarding the variety of the facial type found among them, as he says that "some faces seem to resemble the Negraic, some the Malayan, and some even the Aryan in character;" it is, however, a curious physiognomical fact, of which there can be little or no question, that a remarkable diversity in this respect *does* exist among them, though it is

[1] The extreme ages for child-bearing appear to be 16 and 35 years.
[2] Peschel.

2:Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

not at the hands of their mothers, but of the male members of the tribe.

Reproduction.—1. Marriages never take place till both parties have attained maturity, and generally not till a few years later; the usual age of the bridegroom varies from 18 to 22, and of the bride from 16 to 20. The result of inquiries tends to show that there is a slight predominance of female over male births; three or four is the average number of children born of the same parents. The largest family known consisted of six, three only of whom attained maturity.[1]

2. Twins are rare, and as no instance can be recalled of both surviving infancy, notwithstanding all possible care being bestowed on them, they are not favourably regarded. No case of triplets has been known to occur. Births out of wedlock are considered discreditable, and in the one known instance of the kind, the parents were married immediately after the event; no difference was made in the treatment which the child received.[2]

3. The limited fecundity of the women may in some measure be due to the circumstance that they never wean their babies, so long as they are able to suckle them, and it not unfrequently happens that the two youngest children are seen together at their mother's breast.[3]

4. The ill success in rearing their offspring is doubtless owing in most part to the injudicious management and petting which each of the mother's friends considers right to bestow on the infant. It is looked upon as a compliment for every woman who may be nursing, to relieve the mother of this duty at frequent intervals; it is, therefore, no matter of surprise that the little one ails and dies.

5. The proportion of deaths from violence and accident, is believed to amount to four or five per cent.

6. Barrenness is rare, as are also cases of stillborn children. No drugs or other contrivances are employed in order to increase or limit reproduction.

Abnormalities.—1. Excessive development of fat about the gluteal region is frequently observable among the adult women.

[1] It is said that more children are born during the rains than at any other season of the year.

[2] *Vide post* "Marriage," paragraph 4.

[3] On this subject Dr. Brander remarks as follows:—

"They mostly possess considerable mammary development, and the glands in many cases seem to be in a chronic state of functional activity. This may be due to the late period to which they suckle their young (even to three or four years), or to another purpose to which the milk is applied. . . ." (*vide post*, "Sharing.") [As will be seen from Plate II, fig. 1, the mammæ are pyriform rather than spherical: with the advance of years they become flaccid and elongated.]

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165

Future Prospects of the Race.—It is now 26 years since I first became acquainted with the Andamanese, and I was present amongst them in one of the great devastating outbreaks of infectious disease (measles introduced by convicts from Madras) in 1877, and I personally know how much more numerous they were then than now. The one sad result of the Census has been to demonstrate beyond all doubt, what most local officials suspected and some asserted, that infectious and contagious diseases, the result of contact with an advanced civilisation, are wiping out the Andamanese: at any rate the friendly sections of them. With a population so diminished in one generation and a birth-rate so inadequate, it is obviously impossible, unless the people have reached or are about to reach that point of saturation with these diseases which is also the point of immunity and recovery from their effects, for the race to last out much longer. Excluding the Onge-Jarawas, all the other tribes now number, on any reasoned calculation, not more than 700, of which some 250 belong to one Tribe, the Yere, out of an estimated total of 3,500 only a generation ago, while the children cannot in any case be much more than 25 per cent. of the adults. On these figures, in two more generations, *i.e.*, in probably less than 60 years, even if undisturbed and unmolested by the Jarawas ever-increasing in relative strength, the friendly Tribes must die out. A century must be taken as the extreme limit of a forecast of their existence, unless of course the law of saturation with disease to the point of immunity comes into play.

It also seems not difficult to foresee that it is possible that in a short time the Great Andaman will be occupied by the Penal Settlement and the Jarawas only, with a chance, in the case of the latter becoming friendly and losing their exclusive bearing, that they too will succumb to a rapid disappearance, through what may be called the natural action of infectious and contagious disease, not necessarily carried to them by the civilised alien, but more probably, as past experience shows, by diseased members of the remnants of the "friendly" Tribes captured in collisions with them.

There is nothing new in the disastrous effect of infectious or contagious disease on savages when introduced among them for the first time. It seems to be a process of nature not to be seriously checked by administrative measures. From the very first instructions of the Marquess Wellesley to Archibald Blair in 1789 to the existing practice in dealing with the Andamanese, there has never been any change in the general policy maintained towards the aborigines of the islands. They have been treated uniformly with kindness and consideration. From the first recorded hostile brush with them in 1787 to the operations ending with the gallant death of Mr. P. Vaux on 24th February 1902, nothing more has ever been done than was necessary to prevent murderous raiding into the lands under active occupation by ourselves. It is disease introduced by the carelessness and callousness of civilised individuals in the first instance and spread broadcast amongst the savages by their own ignorance in the next place that has worn down their actual numbers to one-fifth of the former total in one generation and has apparently now rendered the union of the sexes infructuous in three-fourths of the cases.

3: Temple G-5 (1901) 1903 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

From the accompanying returns it will be seen that we can with confidence estimate the present population of Great Andaman (exclusive of the Jarawas) at no higher figure than 600, of whom only 20°/₀ are children, while the Onges and Jarawas together are believed not to exceed, 1,000, *viz.* :— 000

Onges (Little Andaman)	500
Jarawas (South and Middle Andaman)	350
Do. (Rutland Island)	100
Do. (North Sentinel)	150

Diary of Captain A. R. S Anderson, I.M.S., Senior Medical Officer, Port Blair, on the second tour round the Andaman Islands on Course duty from the 15th to 19th February 1901.

15th February 1901.—Embarked on the *Bess*, left Port Blair about 6-30 A.M., accompanied by the *Belle* and, after a smooth passage, reached Kyd Island soon after 9-30. Having communicated with the inhabitants—Andamanese and convicts—and landed a few fowls for breeding purposes, we departed for Middle Straits, through which we passed, with occasional rain squalls and anchored for the night close to and inside the northern entrance of Port Anson. We landed and made a Census of the people, who had been collected from the surrounding country by Andamanese left here for this purpose on our former trip. Here, as in all the other places visited, the great paucity of children was very noticeable. Only one of the women had two children, the others possessing either one each or none. The commonest story they tell is that their first or first and second children are dead and that the one with them is the sole survivor. The great child mortality is undoubtedly due to the very extensive prevalence of syphilis which displays itself in some of its most virulent forms among these people. The infantile mortality is certainly not due to maternal neglect, as the mothers display great affection for their children. 165

We landed some cocks and hens, strictly enjoining the people not to eat but to feed them and allow them to breed and to this they readily assented. We also distributed some sprouting cocoanuts which seemed much appreciated. 050

16th February 1901.—Left Port Anson at 6 A.M., and at 10 entered Port Campbell : made the circuit of the harbour, sounded the whistle several times, but failed to evoke any response from the inhabitants until we were actually departing. Then the people on the *Belle* discovered some Andamanese on the western shore, close to the entrance of the harbour. About eight women with a few children and some eight men were seen slowly wending their way along the sand towards the southern part of the bay. We again whistled to attract their attention and slowly stood in towards the shore, at about three cables from which we came to an anchor. No sooner had we done so than the men began wading out from the shore towards us, using threatening gestures with their bows and arrows, while the women and children, with their camp gear slung in baskets on their backs, made off at a quicker pace along the upper part of the beach. Seeing their inability to reach us, the men slowly retreated after the women leaving three of their number behind to act as a rear guard. As we were anxious to see these people at close quarters, to accurately count them, and if possible to establish friendly relations, we put off in our boat to the shore. In the boat were Messrs. Man and D'Oyly and myself, a convict at the tiller and a crew of some seven Andamanese together with an Andamanese woman, whose shrill cries we hoped might prove to the savages ashore our pacific intent. The crew as usual took their bows and arrows with them, but carefully kept them concealed in the bottom of the boat ; and, as our Andamanese assured us very positively that their compatriots ashore were bent on mischief, Mr. D'Oyly took a Manser pistol and I a ·303 rifle. As we approached the shore in token of amity we waved our umbrellas, our handkerchiefs, and large pieces of red cloth intended as presents and much appreciated by other Andamanese. We also instructed our Andamanese woman to shout friendly messages : shout she did, and the messages were doubtless—although unintelligible to me—friendly. When we were still about one hundred yards from the water's edge and had only just sufficient water to float our boat, while inshore of us stretched a coral shoal with a foot or less of water on it, the three rear-guard Andamanese came leaping down the shore and, after trying their bows to see that they were in good order, with loud shouts rushed into the water to the attack of our boat. I went forward, stood in the bows of the boat and waved the cloth presents vigorously and got the woman to again shout. In vain ; they totally ignored our friendly overtures. The three warriors formed into line abreast, an interval of about 15 yards separating the one from the other, and ran towards us splashing through the water which reached half-way up to their knees. The man attacking the bows of the boat, who was the ring-leader and directing the operations of the other two making the flank attack, had his arrow already on the bow-string and was in the act of firing, being now well within bow-shot 60—80 yards, when after motioning him to stop and his disregarding my order, I fired at and struck him in the right thigh. He spun round and made off for the beach, followed by the other two. After running a short way up the shore, he was joined by his comrades and while one carried him on his back into the bush, the other ran off along the shore yelling to the rest of the party who were now hastening forward to the attack. As our retreat was out of the question and we had not the slightest desire to renew such an unequal contest I fired a shot into the sand a few feet in front of the party to warn them that they were well within range. This so greatly surprised and alarmed them that they at once rushed into the forest and we saw them no more. After waiting about ten minutes longer and again trying in vain to

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

common in the Andamans, said by RADCLIFFE-BROWN (p. 273) to be eaten by the Andaman Islanders as a protection against rheumatism, is never killed. For some superstitious reason the Onge are simply horrified at the thought of touching such an enormous flying bat. Among the fruits, those of a plant whose wood has such a revolting smell that it is known, in English, as "stool-tree", are believed to have exceptional protective properties for the human body. The fruits themselves smell even worse than the wood, but this, to the Onge, makes them appetizing rather than disgusting. Concerning honey, and the many sugary fruits of the jungle that are available all the year round, the Onge luckily ignore the simple method of distilling alcohol. No intoxicating drink reaches Little Andaman from the outer world, whereas in Great Andaman alcohol, together with imported syphilis, was one of the main causes of depopulation. No syphilis appears as yet to have reached Little Andaman. This is also confirmed by the research carried out by Dr. HERMANN LEHMANN of London's St. Bartholomew's Hospital, during February 1953 in my Onge camp in Labanare (north-east coast of Little Andaman).

II. Effects on the People's Lives

The islanders die young, specially the men. The majority of them succumb before reaching the age of 20; most of the survivors die between 20 and 40; the rest – with a very few exceptions – before 50. Women, after marriage, follow a similar pattern: the death rate among women, however, is slightly different owing to a less corrosive sexual life. Some women may live to the age of sixty, but both sexes age soon, appearing older than their years when still in their twenties. The short Onge span of life recalls conditions which apparently prevailed among prehistoric and protohistoric men. Palaeolithic man died at an earlier age than modern man. The Onge today, in many respects, behaves as palaeolithic man behaved countless centuries ago. – Infant mortality is high; the first five days of life are the most critical for the Onge, owing, in part, to the hard life led by mothers even during pregnancy, which often causes functional damage to the placenta. Delivery is generally easy and traumatic injury rarely occurs; but premature births are common, and so are malformations and other anomalies. Imperfect infants are quickly eliminated by their parents. As a result, only a small number of children are allowed to grow up, but these appear normal. There are no blind and no deaf-and-dumb people in Little Andaman. I saw only two instances of incipient lameness: in an unmarried boy of about twenty and in a young married woman. Only robust infants can survive.

The Onge, so careful about their food, are completely indifferent to something else that is considered very harmful in continental and insular regions close to the Andamans. There, menstruating women are often segregated and considered harmful to the entire community. Not so in Little Andaman, where the remedies applied in the circumstance are extremely primitive (cf. supra) and could probably be traced to palaeolithic man. I saw nothing

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

162 boys and girls and children of the widows. The break-up of the total population is given below.

Table No 3

	Male	Female
Adult	46	61
Child	30	24
	76	85

On the consideration of the total population, there is a 5.6% excess of the female population over the male population.

However, the further break-up of the total number of Onges counted by Sri Nigam reveals some of the most important demographic characteristics of the Onge population. Considering only the 45 family units, it is found that there is a preponderance of males over the females as is evident from the table below.

Table No 4

	Individuals			Children		
No. of families	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
45	75	67	138	26	22	48

162 589 The Onge of the 'unattached' type, therefore, are comprised of 5 males and 18 females. Of this 10 are widows. So the predominance of the females among the Onges may be due to a higher percentage of widows whereas the widowers are much less in number. This throws another 165 important light on the logevity of the Onge males and females. The females, as it stands, have a longer life than males and this is not only a very important aspect of the Onge population but also of the other tribes of the world. In Africa also such a higher longevity of the females is discernible which is due, as is commonly believed to higher resistive power of the females to fight the odds of life compared to the males.

163 The fertility of the adult females are also extremely poor. He writes[1] in 'the total of 61 adult females there were 10 widows who were too old for child-bearing, 4 married women with their child-bearing period finished, while there were 8 married women with no possibility of any issue. Thus

1 Nigam, R. C.—Little known tribes of the Andaman Islands—Their problems & prospects; Vanyajati, Vol. VIII, July, 1960. No. 3.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onges

from a nut carried by the sea from some tree hundreds of miles away). There was thus ample food for several days, if only the coconuts could be opened. The Onges' teeth solved the problem. They attacked the nuts close to the stalk, stripping off great chunks of the fibrous outer covering until they had uncovered the three 'eyes'. These they dug out with a sharp piece of stick, so that we were able to drink the juice and then break up the nuts to get at the flesh. Never did coconuts taste so good!

Round the base of the tree I saw a thick layer of broken pieces of coconut, the remains of nuts opened by the Onges' teeth over the years. The strength of their bite resembles that of the African pygmies, whom I have seen hanging by their teeth from the lianas and who can dent the barrel of a gun.

The average life span of the Onges, and indeed of the Andamanese in general, is fairly short. On Little Andaman there are probably no individuals over the age of sixty, and most die before fifty. Here again they differ from African peoples of similar stature; Bushmen have been known to live to a hundred, and I saw one in Natal, incredibly wrinkled, but not shrunken, who was certainly near that age if not, as he claimed, over it. This is quite unknown in the Andamanese. There are none with white hair; although a few white hairs can sometimes be found on the head of an old woman, there are none to be seen in the men, who die younger than the women. There is no baldness, which is by no means rare in Negroes, particularly in southern Africa.

Precise age is not easy to determine in the Onges. Visual assessment is hampered by the absence of the signs of ageing common in Europeans. Moreover, a particularly child-like expression often lasts into adult life. In May 1952 I saw on Car Nicobar two Jarawa youths, small but robust, whose age by our standards one would have estimated at ten or twelve years. One turned out to be fourteen, however, and the other at least two years older, and both were adolescent, despite their childish appearance.

Males appear to reach their maximum height at about eighteen, and females at about sixteen; both sexes reach full maturity at about twenty-three. At forty-five they are old: their hard life, their unbalanced diet, with its enormous quantities of fat meat eaten in excess, and complete absence of salt, and their unrestrained sexual activity, may all be contributing factors. The slightly greater age

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onges

The slightly greater age reached by the women may possibly be explained by their somewhat less arduous life physically, but biological factors may be the root cause. Despite their deceptively youthful appearance the menopause is over by the age of thirty-eight, at the latest, and they remain in good health thereafter, looking amazingly young. The oldest man I saw was Enagaghe, the head of one of the groups, and he could not have been more than fifty-five. He happily accompanied me on long and arduous trips into the forest, and climbed trees like a squirrel after honey and fruit; neither his appetite nor his zeal as a lover were impaired. His stomach managed to cope with something like a kilo a day of meat, skin and fat, plus fruit, boiled roots and honey. In a hot, damp, oppressive climate like that of the Andamans such a diet year after year cannot fail to produce a state of chronic intestinal poisoning likely to affect the organism as a whole, and may contribute to shorten life, despite an apparent physical vigour.

Connected, perhaps, with their excesses is the fact that the Onges' normal body temperature is much higher than usual; with a temperature reading of thirty-eight degrees centigrade they are in good health, with unimpaired appetite. I found an average temperature of thirty-seven point five degrees centigrade in males of various ages, the younger men tending to give the higher readings. The average in females was slightly higher than in males. I was able to observe for myself completely normal behaviour in Onges who by European standards would have been regarded as severely febrile. In part, as I have said, this may be due to diet and absence of salt, but it must certainly be regarded at least in part as a racial characteristic. It may, too, have some effect on their low vitality; it is interesting that temperatures in the Bushmen and pygmies of Africa, with their longer expectation of life, never vary far from the European norm.

These abnormally high temperatures are not a symptom of malaria. This is clinically unknown in the Andamanese although it is a serious menace to outsiders. Even a few hours on the island can lead to infection if precautions are not taken. I made all the men with me take their tablets regularly, even when propaganda in India against immunization as a Western importation led to objections, so that I had to force the tablets into their mouths myself to ensure that they were swallowed.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

842 163 enjoy the active marital relationships necessary, according to their husbands, to encourage the entry of the benevolent spirits which bring motherhood. The late onset of fertility in all Andamanese 842 163 women and perhaps in men as well[1] probably depends on mechanisms which have been operating for a very long time, affecting 165 the sex ratio at birth, and preferential infant mortality in one sex. 123 124 By a combination of observation and deduction I was able to be reasonably certain that among the Onges at least more males are born than females. The disparity is reduced, though not eliminated, by a higher mortality rate in young males. Males thus remain in excess, making it difficult for some, possibly fertile, to find wives.

842 143 161 There are certain peoples – notably the Pitcairn Islanders – who have arisen by repeated inbreeding for hundreds of years from a very few individuals. It is clear from this example that genetic isolation and inbreeding cannot of themselves cause numerical, physical or mental decline of a population. The problem merits further investigation. Civilization has perhaps accused herself unjustly of causing the decline of primitive races, whereas she has in fact only hastened the disappearance of groups already heading for demographic decadence as the result of physiological factors which lie within the group itself, and which are consequently difficult to counteract. The intrinsic damage done by civilization as such has, in my opinion, been considerably exaggerated in some quarters.

855 597 Possibly because of the low birth rate the maternal instinct is very highly developed in the women of the Andamans, even to the point of 'adopting' children temporarily. These children are always given lavish affection, and are kept sometimes for years, or even permanently if the parents do not ask for them back. Given the language barrier, this custom makes census-taking difficult as childless couples happily declare adopted children as their own. Nabimbòi, with no children of her own, always had children with her, and it was only the fact that they differed from year to year that led me to suspect what was happening! One wonders whether the custom was not already common before outsiders first came to the Andamans, owing to the existence of a high incidence of sterility long before the arrival of civilization.

[1] There is some evidence of infertility in the men, but it is clear that this is of relatively minor importance.

Andaman, in Yeratil Jig (near Port Anson, about fifteen miles from Long Island) in Diglipur (or Dilyapur) Creek, near Port Cornwallis, and in Wilima Jig,[1] but they are now extinct. In March 1952 the Onges had described the presence of crocodiles so clearly to me as to leave no doubt what they meant, and I soon received confirmation when I found their tracks on the sand about one kilometre from the mouth of Jackson Creek, on the right bank, and then saw some lying on the shore across the creek. Through my field glasses I saw small birds pecking between the teeth of the great wide-open jaws. As we approached they slid lazily into the sea, some reappearing a little later, their cavernous mouths rising vertically out of the water. Every day after that I saw them swimming quietly near the banks, and one afternoon my men and I between us saw over a dozen, near Nachuge, dozing in the mud or in the water.

The Onges assured me that crocodiles will come out of the water to a certain whistle. I got them to try it; the Onges whistled, and whistled again, but no crocodiles came!

Very different from the great turtles and the crocodiles, but equally important in the daily life of the Onges, are the crabs from which the islanders make their ancient and very characteristic pipes. They eat the crabs and use the claws to make the pipes, cutting them across the joint and boring a hole in the end, as they have done since time immemorial, to smoke aromatic leaves from the forest. Fragments of similar pipes, charred with use, appear in even the lowest strata of the kitchen-middens, dating back thousands of years and proving the antiquity of the smoking habit. Contrary to popular belief, smoking did not begin everywhere with the introduction of tobacco – in Asia at least men smoked thousands of years ago.

The claw pipes of the Onges have a groove cut round the end which goes into the mouth, so that the teeth can grip it better. I have seen identical pipes, with the same groove, in the Melville Islands, where there are many other signs of ethnographic connections with the Andamans. The canoes, for example, are identical with those of the Andamans; the peoples themselves, however, are today very different physically.

[1] According to Portman a man was dragged into the water here on 11 May 1894 by a crocodile and killed; several similar incidents have occurred since.